DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 283 938 CE 047 192

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TITLE Religious Influences on Adult Education in the United Kingdom to 1900.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; *Church Programs; *Church Role; Educational Change; Educational History; *Educational Philosophy; Foreign Countries; *Religious Factors
IDENTIFIERS *Church of England; *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Historical tradition, both oral and written, has contributed to a strong religious influence in the educational system throughout British history. To the beginning of the 19th century, the state or Church of England maintained firm control on the content of religious and secular education. Indeed, all education, no matter how informal, was seen as religious in nature. British religious education was not always Christian education, however. Before the arrival of the Romans in 78 A.D., the indigenous religion of the Druids combined astrology and animism. The Romans then brought their pantheistic religious system. In the Anglo-Saxon period (600-1066), the emphasis was on education in the service of Christianity; in the early medieval period (1066-1300), education became a function of the church. It was not until the period between 1530 and 1660 that social change and educational expansion brought about the transfer of religious control over education and politics from the Church of Rome to the Throne of England. In the age of industrialization Sunday school was the only hope of education for those who could not afford school fees. Self-education, often with assistance from clergy, was becoming more popular. Since 1900, there has been a significant decline in the extent of religious influences in British adult education. (MN)

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Religious Influences on Adult Education in the United Kingdom to 1900

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Running head: RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

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Religious Influences on Adult Education in the United Kingdom to 1900

In studying the history of the United Kingdom one may begin with the presupposition that all education is intended for adults and reflects the religious bias or values of a society. One of the most basic societal functions of education is the transmission of knowledge, norms, and values (Clausen, 1966, p. 153). Any government or religious group that controls the selection and training of teachers as well as the content of what is to be taught can determine the world view of learners. The school is the primary regulator of moral education and the moral environment where one can learn how to "know and love" his culture (Durkheim, 1963, p. 67). Certainly this is true of England and is reflected in works such as those by Kelly (1970), Newsome (1961), and Saffin (1973). One of the respected responsibilities of the reigning sovereign is to defend the faith. The monarch of England is crowned while seated in the Coronation Chair which rests above the Stone of Scone which is believed to be the Bethel Stone, the very stone erected by Jacob, Abraham's grandson (Genesis 28: 18-22).

Subsequent claim is then made for direct descendency of David with an obligation to keep, from a Christian perspective, the laws of Moses. In the Pentateuch the instruction is given for the education of youth to preserve the traditions, history, and faith of the Hebrews (Deuteronomy 6:20).

Historical tradition, both oral and written, has contributed to a strong religious influence in the educational system throughout British history. This has also been true of the educational system of the United States (Knowles, 1977). In England, to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the state or Church of England maintained firm control on the content of religious and secular education. Indeed there was no secular education. All education was seen, no matter how informally, as religious in nature.

Christianity was introduced to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea who founded the first Christian church in England in the area of Glastonbury in the latter third of the first century (Montgomery, 1887, p.14; Walsh 1887, p. 468). Further speculation has the Judahic Tribe of Benjamin, one of the ten lost tribes of Israel, migrating through Greece and France (Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, 1982, p.242-250) and finally into Scotland. The Scone Stone was taken from the Scots as

a spoil of war by Edward I in 1296. Since that time every English sovereign including Edward II in 1307 has been crowned on the Coronation Chair above that famous stone.

British religious education was not always Christian education. Before the Romans arrived about 78 A.D., the indigenous religion of the Druids was combined of astrology and animism (Montgomery 1887, p. 2). The Romans brought their pantheistic religious system. It is from this beginning that the modern education practices developed or at least evolved.

The Anglo-Saxon period (600-1066) focused on education in the service of Christianity. Adults were taught through the media of pulpit, confessional, and specific religious classes in order to bring them into the church (Elias, 1984, p. 3). The very first adult educators were the emissaries and missionaries of the newly developing religious norms. Towards the end of this period the Ottoman Empire was spreading in the near East, laying the foundation for the crusades to free the Holy Lands from the occupation and control of the Islamic religion.

During the early medieval period (1066-130) education became a function of the church. Each

cathedral was tasked with the development and maintenance of a school for the training of the clerics who became eventually more secular than ecclesiastical. Grammar schools developed within the cathedrals as well as lesser church edifices where in the thirteenth century the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were founded (Lawson and Silver 1973, p. 22).

It must be noted that during this period of adult education development there was not a great amount of public or even governmental support for education which involved the skills of reading and writing. There were few books written during this time since they could only be written and copied by hand. The nobility believed that reading and writing was beneath them and many could not write their own name. King William at his coronation on Christmas Day 1066 signed the Charter of London by making the mark 'X' beneath the short but famous document (Montgomery, 1887 pp. 54, 78). The crusades (1096-1270) were the outgrowth of religious teachings and placed extreme pressure on national treasuries. Both the Catholic Church and the Throne of England were tasked with protecting the faith (Christian) and were responsible for expelling the infidels (Islamic) from Jerusalem, the holy city of Jews and Christians. The urgency and cost of the

crusades nearly bankrupted the British economy.

During the Later Medieval Period (1300-1530) education began to move from within the churches to without the churches. More and more communities began conducting grammar schools for those who could pay the fees. Poor persons were seldom able to pay the high fees required to maintain ones self in school (Lawson and Silver, 1973, p. 48). The terms "adult" and "child" are rather nebulous during this period since there was no distinction made for childhood. Death and mortality were so prevalent that boys who started school began by the age of seven and entered university by age fourteen. Boys from age seven studied in the same room with deacons, priests, and married men. They all studied Latin and were treated differently based only on their degree of achievement (Lawson and Silver, p. 49). This is the great expansion era for the universities. The growth of libraries was evident. Peterson House reportedly had 380 books in 1418. Even at this time all the universities and colleges had the same mission to increase the number of educated clergy (Lawson and Silver, p. 61).

Monasteries were significant during this period because they began to develop grammar and song schools

for laity. The nunneries made a limited education available to girls who from wealthy families could pay the fees of staying at the nunnery. Financial needs of the nunnery may have prompted the intake of girl students into residence. Their learning was restricted to reading and singing the services of the church, needlework, household chores, and manners (Lawson and Silver, 1973).

The first complete translation of the Latin Bible into English was by John Wycliffe who as a "Poor Priest" dressed in red sackcloth, barefooted, and carrying a staff went from town to town preaching "God's law" demanding that both Church and State reaffirm commitment to it. Since the printing press was not introduced into London until 1476, copies of this English translation were all done by hand an were extremely expensive. Farmers would trade entire loads of farm products for a few chapters (Montgomery, 1887, p.137).

The period of social change and educational expansion (1530-1660) marked the transfer of religious control over education and politics from the Church of Rome to the Throne of England. While the Reformation was taking place in Europe, the English were turning away from Roman Catholicism. Henry VIII, unable to

obtain permission from the Roman pope to divorce his wife, the queen, severed all ties with the Roman church and made himself the head of the church of England. All monasteries and other religious institutions were closed and their holdings nationalized. The liturgy was replaced with new forms of Episcopal worship. Education became again the medium for change and acceptance of the mores and values of the society. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge were required to acknowledge the state supremacy over the church. During this period apprenticeship and technical training remained a significant part of the public educational system. Some educational advancements were beginning in villages with an increase of literacy among males (Lawson and Silver, 1973, p. 142). The expansion in mathmatics and lesser sciences began the ground swell of humanism which changed the aim and emphasis of education from the propagation of the faith to the amelioration of poor social conditions. The printing press was to expand the scope and potential for adult education.

Pre-industrial England (1660-1800) was turbulent in the changes that occurred. Following the Puritan Revolution 1640-1660, when the monarchy was restored

along with the Episcopal form of worship, severe laws were passed to insure allegiance to the Church of England. The Uniformity Act of 1662 required all clergy, schoolmasters, and tutors to conform to the teachings of the liturgy and to give up any obligation to change church or state. Thousands of Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and Congregationalists were disenfranchised, left homeless, and even put to death when they refused to swear allegiance to King Charles II (Montgomery, 1887, p. 271). A leader among the non-conformists was John Bunyan who served twelve years in Bedford prison where he wrote The Pilgrim's Progress. This work was a major contribution to the religious education of adults in England and America well into the twentieth century. Religious persecution hastened colonialization and religious leaders and educators fled to the New World to establish long sought religious freedom. American schools of higher learning were founded to insure the propagation of religious faith and freedom (Kelly, 1970, p. 5).

It is easy to see that the influence of religion in the educational development of the United Kingdom has a rich heritage. The influence of religion on adult education played a central role until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The beginning of

the Industrial Revolution about 1800 began to produce urbanization, poverty, illiteracy, disease and crime. Schools which had for centuries been religious in support and nature were now being challenged as to their social sufficiency. There began movements to justify the very existence of the religious schools. In his 1810 publication, Education Respectfully Proposed and Recommended as the Surest Means Within the Power of Government to Diminish the Frequency of Crimes, Harrison said (Saffin, 1973, p.139), "If the most barbarous people on the face of the earth receive a religious education they will become pious, moral and amiable." Another work of limited interest, but one which reflects the role of the headmaster or schoolmaster at King Edward's School during the mid to late 1800's, is Godliness and Good Learning (Newton, 1961). The title alone is worth noting as it reflects the rationale of the boarding schools from their beginnings.

Poverty was a reality as England industrialized. Children throughout this period are hardly discernible from adults. Child-adults worked long and hard under the most severe conditions. It was not unusual for a youth by age nine to begin work in a factory or

sweatshop where he or she would labor from pre-dawn to nine or ten at night (Harrison, 1961, p. 45). If education was to happen, it had to happen for the working class on their own time, at their own rate, and on their own inititive. For the poor who could not afford the school fees, Sunday school was their only hope of education. Self-education was becoming more and more the only avenue to be pursued. "In a broad sense all adult education is essentially a process of self-education, even when under the guidance of an expert teacher, and its intrinsic value is likely to be directly determined by the degree of student effort it calls forth." (Harrison, 1961, p.43).

One such factory worker who, at the age of sixteen opted to become self-educated, was Joseph Barker. Even while working twelve to sixteen hours a day he began to learn Latin and Greek, a system of shorthand, mathmatics and history. He received tutoring from Methodist ministers for an hour before and for an hour after work. During his years of study he received not so much as encouragement from family and neighbors. Baker, in his later writings, does not tell the source of his motivation for learning but three characteristics stand out, his love of learning, his

love of books, and his love of study for its own sake. (Barker, 1845).

This short overview of the religious influences on adult education in the United Kingdom to 1900 begins only to touch the great wealth of British history and its influence on American adult education. Since 1900 there has been a significant decline of religious influences in British adult education. Religious influences have given way to secular and scientific influences. In keeping with the presupposition that all education is intended for adults and reflects the religious bias or values of a society, future study may well address the decline of the religious influence in adult education in the light of secular humanism and the resurgence of religious influence in the light of Christian fundamentalism.

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